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SOURCE Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, No 226, 1949.CLOSE ALMA-ATA NATIONAL FOREST

The following is a letter from M. Zverev to the editorial staff of Kazakhstan-skaya Pravda:

The State National Forest located near Alma-Ata in Kazakh SSR has been closed, and the Zailiyskiy Ala-Tau and Kungey-Ala-Tau, which offered exceptional natural conditions for carrying on large scale scientific experiments, are no longer available for this work. Some years ago, as many as 60 scientific expeditions and 400 scientific workers and students from universities all over the Soviet Union worked in the Alma-Ata National Forest during the summer. Students from higher educational institutions of Kazakh SSR and expeditions from scientific research institutes of Alma-Ata came here for their practice work. The scientific branch of the national forest also carried on its own research work in studying the forest, zoology, botany, soil science, and hydrogeology.

According to the general plan for the development of the Alma-Ata National Forest, provisions were made for acquainting workers with the southern mountains, for building necessary roads and rest homes, and for domesticating wild animals. A great deal of this work was undertaken and successfully completed. One year ago, however, it ended. The administrative and scientific staffs were reduced by 99.9 percent, with only one chauffeur remaining. All the collections, manuscripts, and laboratory equipment of the national forest were thrown into trucks and moved to Chilik. The last two issues of a journal containing work done in the national forest prior to its closing have now been lying untouched for a year.

The national forest area now has three forest managements which administer a large number of special forests (lesnichestvo). Instead of having one director and ten persons for administrative personnel, the same area is being administered by three directors, three bookkeepers, and 50 administrative workers. Thus, it can be seen that reorganization was neither carried out for measures of economy, nor for the expansion of logging, nor for the promotion of water conservation, since all this could have been easily accomplished by further financial assistance to the national forest rather than by shutting the forest down. For what reason then was it done?

Moreover, some changes have occurred in this area during the year which has just passed. Livestock is now found in all the hills. Many shepherds with dogs and rifles wander around the hills "to protect the livestock herds from wolves,"

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notwithstanding the fact that not a single wolf has been seen in the hills extending from the large Alma-Ata to Talgara during the past ten years. On the other hand, the shepherds do use the rifles and dogs for killing wild and beneficial animals which have been carefully cared for and protected for many years. The few guards from the forest managements live far away in the valleys and make only feeble attempts to look after the armed population. No scientific research work is being done at all.

Upon receiving the order to decrease the size of the national forest, the Ministry of Forestry, very unexpectedly for all concerned, carried out the order and closed down the forest, leaving only an area 150 kilometers from Alma-Ata still in forest. This area is to be organized into a new national forest.

The questions we are asking the Ministry of Forestry, Kazakh SSR, are: Why has it destroyed all that was done during the past ten years by so much effort and hard labor? What is the basis for closing down an institution for preserving nature when the Party and government appeal to us to transform and preserve nature? Why was it mandated that the national forest be closed when it is necessary to construct new institutions of exactly this type?

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